

Upcoming Events

➤ **Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup**

Saturday, June 18, 2016, 09:00am - 11:00am

Long ago (July 1995), but not in a galaxy far away, Sacramento-area freethinkers "adopted" a two-mile stretch of Highway 99 extending from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road. Since then we've done a fair job keeping it clean of litter and debris, and received recognition for this. It is, in fact, one of our more successful civic efforts, and shows that freethinkers can also serve the community.

So why not join us? Enjoy a morning commune with nature, and do a deed for the environment and local area wildlife. The refuse that we collect would otherwise ultimately be swept by rain into tributaries and the ocean, degrading habitat, and bringing slow death to many creatures.

And the things you might find ... Over the years volunteers have recovered many *highly esoteric* items: lacy under garb, erotic equipment, drug paraphernalia, even \$100 bills -- yo, we don't kid, *actual C-notes* littered amid the highway detritus! -- and even stranger things. No, we are too delicate of disposition to say ... we blush, we drop our eyes, but ... surprises await.

As usual, the activity captain will provide all safety equipment, including comfortable, natty hard-hats and gloves, stylish safety vests, collection bags, and handy trash pickers. The cleanup takes a scant two hours. Please dress for the season. It may be a good idea to bring a backpack or fanny-pack to carry 3 or 4 trash bags.

Location: Travel north from Sacramento on I-5, past Sleep Train Arena. Take the "Highway 99 - Yuba City, Marysville" exit. Exit at Elkhorn Boulevard less than a mile north. Turn left, cross the overpass. Meet in the park-&-ride lot on your left.
For more info or carpooling, contact: Don, 916-447-2169.



➤ **Philosophers' Table: God on Our Cash?**

Sunday, June 26, 2016, 12 Noon

In God We Trust. It has been the official U.S. motto since 1956, replacing *E pluribus unum* (One From Many). It's there on your money, unless someone scribbled it out.

Is this (arguably at least) a violation of the United States Constitution, prohibiting the government from passing laws "respecting" any establishment of religion? Or simple ceremonial deism? Come discuss this with other atheists and nonbelievers (and believers too, who are welcome to join the forum).

Remember to respect each other's opinions and feelings, always help to ensure everyone's voice is heard, and be gentle with the furniture.

Editor's Note: Sorry, I can't make this one, but how about a compromise like, "In God some of Us Trust" or "In God Not All of Us Trust"?



Location: Sacramento Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A. Map: <https://goo.gl/iVQL8z>.

➤ **Ron Garret - Cruelty, Kindness and Secular Morals**

Sunday, June 26, 2016, 01:00pm - 03:00pm

So you're secular, that's great. Take a bow. That's enough, sit down. Now ask, why be moral? Why care for others?

Religious believers often attack the secular community on just this, the idea that irreligion means no ground for morality. And sometimes in reply we ... change the subject.

In fact, evidence shows secular societies *do* tend to be kinder, more ethical, more benevolent. Like Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, Estonia, Japan. But exceptions exist. What of Pol Pot, Stalin, or Red China? And a theory of secular morality has been elusive, much like nailing down Jell-O.



Even old Bertrand Russell threw in the towel, quipping, "I cannot see how to refute the arguments for the subjectivity of ethical values, but I find myself incapable of believing that all that is wrong with wanton cruelty is that I don't like it."

Now Ron Garret graciously visits us to offer a coherent model for a secular moral code, one aligned with humanistic ideas of loving kindness. His proposed framework, "idea-ism" (a pun on the word "idealism"), was inspired by Richard Dawkins's proposal, introduced in his seminal 1976 book "The Selfish Gene," that memes or ideas are replicating entities subject to Darwinian evolution, much like genes. Ron Garret argues that this idea ought to be taken even more seriously than Dawkins himself took it, and that it leads to a moral code that has all of the features that modern secular communities tend to gravitate towards naturally. As such, it can serve as a principled answer to the faith-based critique of secular morality.

A bit about Ron Garret, Ph.D. He is a computer scientist, entrepreneur, angel investor, blogger, filmmaker, and non-believer in unicorns (an a-unicornist). His Google tech talk, "The quantum conspiracy: what popularizers of quantum mechanics don't want you to know", has over a million views on YouTube. *Check it out.*

Location: Sacramento Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A. Map: <https://goo.gl/iVQL8z>.

➤ **AOF Directors Meeting**

Monday, July 11, 7 pm

Come party with the Board! This is an AOF planning meeting for directors & officers, but open to *all* our friends and members. Join us, meet the Board of Directors, and ask questions. Bring your ideas for AOF, your strategies, your gripes, your tactics, and your plan for events and activities. Most of all bring your wonderful volunteerism. Yes, bring that!

Location: Reason Center, 1824 Tribute Rd, Suite A, Sacramento. Map: <https://goo.gl/iVQL8z>.



The Inverted World of Cyrus Teed

Bend your mind a bit. You know about the Flat Earth Society, and its insurgency against atheistic round-earth dogma. It dates back to 1849. The last major flat-earth spokesman, Rev. Charles K. Johnson, died in March 2001. The FE Society may or may not still exist, no one seems sure. It is, or was, one of my favorite sects. But not my *most* favorite. Listen.

Imagine a world not flat, but spherical, and hollow too. Imagine us living on the surface within, like bacteria on a beach ball's interior—the planets, the stars, the wheeling constellations all afloat in the concave space, the farthest of them mere dust motes only 4000 miles away, and the true external universe (under our feet) consisting of solid matter going out and out forever—what then? This was the inverted view of Cyrus Teed, an eccentric doctor (herbalist, actually) from upstate New York.

In 1869, Cyrus had a vision: a beautiful woman appeared and explained to him the true, divine form of the world. Taking the name Koresh (do not confuse, please, with David Koresh of Waco), he published *The Cellular Cosmology*, his *opus magnum*, where he eagerly explained Earth's concavity. "All that is opposed to Koreshanity is antichrist," proclaimed the Cyrus/Koresh.

The sun is in the center. Dark on one side, it turns; this explains day and night. Tricks of optics produce the illusions of sunrise, sunset and a horizon, and also occlude our view of the antipodal continents directly above. The moon is some kind of weird reflection of the Earth (Koresh thought he could see outlines of the continents on it).

Besides astronomy and geology, he also denounced the scientific method, Copernican theory, atomic theory, chemistry, conventional surveying, and of course optics. Everything you know is not just wrong, but *damn* wrong.

The new prophet toured and preached. He founded a communal society in Chicago, the Koreshan Unity; a periodical, *The Flaming Sword*; and eventually a political party (no, not the libertarians, shut up). At its height, "Koreshanity" had a several thousand followers. In the 1890s he established the town of Estero in Florida, near Ft. Meyers, declaring it the coming capital of the world. He expected eight million settlers. About 250 came.

He also taught that after his death he would rise to heaven, taking his faithful followers with him. Alas, he died in 1908, and eventually county health officer forced the colony to bury the rotting body. They placed it in a tomb, which a 1921 hurricane washed out to sea. *The Flaming Sword* continued to publish until 1949. It never admitted the divine leader was gone.

Faithful followers hung on for a while, but now they are sadly gone too. Florida preserves the main colony as a historic site in Estero.

If curious, and with patience, you can read his revelation at <http://www.sacred-texts.com/earth/cc/cc00.htm>.

Ah Cyrus, afloat like the dust of stars within the hollow earth. Rest you well.

by Ken Nahigian, reprinted from the July 2006 issue

When you donate blood...

Please consider donating blood at the BloodSource, and if you do, use AOF BloodSource ID# 4857. Numerous BloodSource Donation Centers exist -- find them listed at: <http://www.bloodsource.org/Locations>. AOF gets no perks when members donate, but it saves lives, and is good for public relations. Can anything be more humanistic than donating blood?

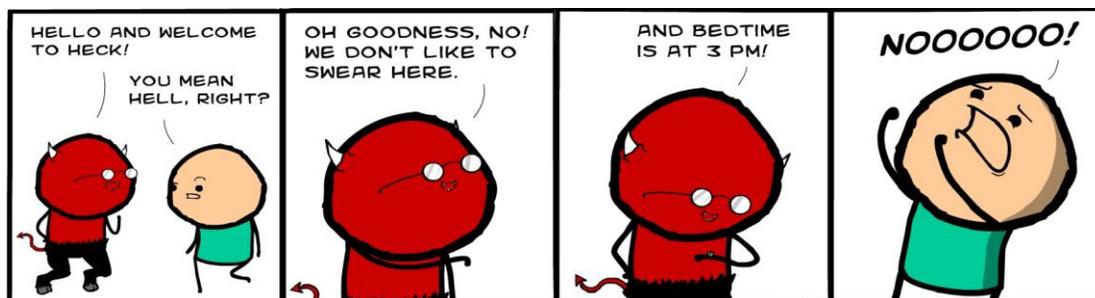
Support the Reason Center

Reason Center (RC) opened its doors in July 2014 on Tribute Road, and has hosted hundreds of freethought events so far, including a wedding! Its mission is to be a freethinkers' safehouse, to foster our community of mind, to contribute to society through education and community service, to advance civic understanding and acceptance of freethinkers, and to uphold a benign separation of religion and government. Also, to be a place to have fun.

So far, so good. But to continue, RC depends on you! Please join it, become an ongoing supporter. The cost is mere dollars per month, such a pittance you'll hardly noticed. And you will get a tax deduction of course. To join Reason Center or make a one-time donation, visit ReasonCenter.org, or call 916-426-6416.

The purpose of Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF) is to promote the civic understanding of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives.

AOF is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762. General Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movie outings, parties! To see what awaits you, visit the website, www.aofonline.org; or contact AOF at our 24/7 voice-mail: 916-447-3589; or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182. Or ... candygram? AOF Acting President: Kristi Craven. Vice-president: Mynga Futrell. Editor: Fran Evanisko. And all the rest of us, their motley crew.



Not yet a member of Atheists and Other Freethinkers? Oh heck! Join us!

Subscription / Membership Form

Mail to: AOF, PO Box 15182, Sacramento CA 95851-0182 (Attn: Membership)

Name(s) _____ Phone: _____

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E-mail is required for newsletter delivery.

Questions, concerns? Call AOF, 916-304-3796.

Your Membership Level (annual, please circle):

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Basic Dues : \$ _____

Additional Donation : \$ _____

Total enclosed : \$ _____

Please check here if you do NOT want your name on lists occasionally provided to groups similar to AOF.

Please check here if you DO want to be an AOF Activist (e-mail address required).

AOF is a 501(c)(3) Educational Association, EIN 68-0325762. Dues & Donations are tax-deductible as permitted by law. Non-members may receive the AOF Newsletter for free on request (email only).